3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
NO6 Comanche NO6

to cook stone-boiled soup. The dried excrement (chips) of the buffalo burned slowly and made a hot and lasting fire for both warmth and cooking; it was sometimes used ceremoniously as a support to keep some sacred object from touching the ground, and it was so endowed with power that scouts swore their oaths of veracity on a pile of buffalo chips. The bones, hoofs, and horns of the buffalo were fashioned into cups, spoons, and ornaments; and the horns were occasionally fashioned into bows or worn on headdresses on special occasions. Sinews from the back made bow strings and thread. Ropes were made from the twisted hair. The hide was used to manufacture clothing, lodge coverings, thongs, saddles, bridles, and bags. When properly finished with the fine coat of wool and the hair left on it, it provided an unusually warm robe. Freed from the hair and dressed, it constituted a summer blanket. A green hide served for a pot before the white traders brought kettles, and braided strands of rawhide provided an excellent rope.

There was a time, according to Comanche legend, when the Indians did not have access to the buffalo. In the version recorded fifty years ago by H. H. St.Clair, Coyote effected their release by a ruse.[33] In a hitherto unpublished version given by That's It in 1933 it was *Ka:wus*, the Culture Hero, who turned the trick.

« « « Our knowledge only goes to the point where man and the earth were already here.

The People were out playing three kinds of games one day—the wheel game, throwing arrows, and shooting with the bow. A strange man came amongst them. He talked to no one. Just stood there looking on with a quiver over his shoulder.

After a while he said, "I'll go over there to defecate." He laid down his quiver and jumped in a creek. While he was down there, a young man went up and looked in his bag. There was a nice piece of fat in it. He took it up and showed it to the other Indians. They all wondered where that old man came from. "He certainly has plenty of meat," they all said.

Then they all plotted to stop playing at meal time. They left the

[33] H. H. St. Clair, "Shoshone and Comanche Tales," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, No. 85 (July–September, 1909), 280–81.

Food, Clothing, and Dwellings

Compared to a good tipi, the shack of the frontiersman was a poor makeshift. The tipi shed wind and water and was warm and well ventilated. It could be set up within fifteen minutes and could be struck in less time. In hot weather the cooking was done outside. Actually, during much of the summer and autumn little shelter was really needed. In the permanent camp a brush arbor was often erected in hot weather, under which the entire family or groups of families found refuge from the summer heat. The roof was flat and made of leafy boughs supported by posts seven or eight feet high. The sides were left open to permit full benefit from the breeze. Most Comanches today, even those who have substantial houses, build brush arbors in their yards for lounging and summer sleeping. (There are no bedbugs in the arbors.) Arbors of hooped saplings reminiscent of Shoshone wickiups were also used.

Some owners painted their tipis with a number of encircling stripes and with geometric designs on both the lining and the outside cover. The average tipi, however, did not have the added touch of the artist.

The furnishing of a tipi was like all else in Comanche economic life—simple and highly adapted to mobility. Devices for comfort were a comparatively modern innovation, since it is inconceivable that in the days when the Indians were foot travelers and carried most of their possessions on their backs they would load themselves down with luxuries. In the center of the tipi a round hole was dug for the fire. It has been contended that the only difference in a Kiowa and a Comanche camp was in the fire-hole. The Comanches made their fire-hole about fifteen inches in diameter, while the Kiowas made theirs about two feet.[84]

Before the arrival of the white man, the Comanches produced fire by means of the fire drill. The method consisted of hand twirling a hard stick, held vertically in a hole in a horizontal block of softer material, until the heat ignited the Spanish-moss tinder or birds' nests packed about the hole. Fire drills were kept in cases of buffalo horn, called *na'a:*. Flint and steel for fire-making were among the first articles introduced by Mexican traders. After the introduction of gun powder, the Comanches found that a fire could be started more quick-

[84] Marcy, *Adventure on Red River*, 57.

372 ly and easily by placing a rag around the point of friction and sprinkling gun powder on the rag. And if rags and gun powder were plentiful, they would load an old gun and shoot it against a tree. The rags would light and could be used to start a fire. This method was especially good in wet weather.

When needed, a low fire was kept fed by wood or buffalo chips gathered by the women and children. Buffalo chips were more desirable, since they burned more slowly and the fire did not die out so readily. Their surface remained year after year, unaffected by the weather, except annually they became a little harder until at last it was almost impossible to cut them with a knife. The under side, not being exposed to the sun, retained a certain amount of moisture longer and was never quite so hard. During cold weather the same fire provided heat both for comfort and for cooking food.

352 513 The bed of the lodge owner was placed at the back of the tipi, that is, directly opposite the entrance in the place of honor. Other beds were placed on one or both sides according to need. In the permanent camp, beds were elevated above the ground from four to six inches by means of pole or rawhide slats supported by a couple of poles. Robes were spread on top to form bedding and cover. In the temporary camp the mattress was spread on the ground. Members of the family simply crawled beneath the skins needed for cover, leaving the remainder for a mattress, and, according to informants, slept with their heads to the west. Buffalo-skin partitions were frequently stretched between beds to give a degree of privacy. Pillows were made from skins of smaller animals and stuffed with grass or straw. Although such beds were soft and fairly comfortable, they were also desirable abodes for both dogs and innumerable vermin.

352 Mattresses served as chairs or for lounging as well as for beds. The master of the lodge always occupied the position directly facing the door. On his left was the place of honor for guests. Lodges of well-to-do persons were provided in modern times with back rests at the head and foot of the mattress.

Ample storage space was available between and underneath the beds and toward the front of the tipi. Extra food, clothing, and small articles were stored principally in parfleche bags. When many buffalo were killed, much dried meat was stored away in parfleches

31: Jones E-5 (1967-1970) 1972 NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

775 then unwraps her medicines and exposes them on the cloth in which they were
755 wrapped.
756 Both Sanapia and her patient smoke Bull Durham tobacco wrapped in corn
782 shucks as they wait for the sun to rise. Sanapia prays to the earth immediately
[276] before sunrise, and when the sun appears, she directs her prayers to it.

> In the morning, before the sun come up, you go out away from the house, where nobody can hear you and you pray. You touch the ground with your hands, four times, and say . . . I don't know where it came from, but you say, "Mother earth, I want you to take my words. I want you to do what I want. I'm walking over you. I live on you, and I love you because you're my land." Say things like that to it. That sun not up yet. But it's the big eagle . . . talk to it like it's eagle . . . think of it like that, you know. It's going to fly up pretty soon when the sun comes up, and that's the eagle going to do everything I want.

776 The sun and the earth were the two greatest sources of power in the
821 nomadic Comanche culture. Wallace and Hoebel (1952:190) write that ". . . only
823 the sun, moon, and earth were looked upon as semi-dieties." They were also personified and addressed in prayer. The earth was considered second only to the sun in supernatural importance by the Comanches; however, though they were active in the affairs of men, neither the sun nor the earth gave personal power (Wallace and Hoebel 1952:195–197). Also in the content of the pages just cited are numerous mentions of the earth being addressed as "mother" by the Comanches. Kardiner (1945:63), when discussing Comanche beliefs associated with magic and power, writes: "The greatest powers were the earth, and the sun, with which the eagle was felt to be associated."

775 When the sun appears over the horizon, Sanapia begins her prayers in
755 which she will ask "the eagle" to aid her in healing her patient. The patient,
756 seated beside her, is instructed to pray for his recovery and to put his faith and
782 trust in the powers of the earth and sun. She also indicates her medicines, exposed to the sun, and asks that it will fill them with power.

This period of prayer, first to the earth and then to the rising sun, lasts
[372] about half an hour, or until the sun has completely cleared the horizon. Sanapia then takes her patient back to her house, where her hubsnd or son have already prepared the pecan wood coals which Sanapia will need when she begins to doctor.
[824] Pecan coals are desired because they form long-burning, even coals. At this time
237 she will attach her crow feather amulet to a beam on her front porch. She some-
[778] times affixes several crow feathers to her patient's wrist.

As mentioned previously, in doctoring, Sanapia is alone with her patient.
775 If she is in a tent or tepee, she sits on the south side of the tent, which is custom-
755 arily facing east, and positions her patient directly in front of her. He lies on his
756 back with his head toward the west. The medicines she will use are placed to
[823] her right, and the pecan coals are placed in an iron kettle or shovel so their position can be changed as Sanapia doctors. When she is in a house, she attempts to duplicate these conditions as closely as possible.

After her patient is situated, Sanapia begins her attempt to mobilize her

32: Gilles O,X-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

slough and at some distance from the arbor. Brooms made from the native broom weeds tied tightly to a stick handle, brush end down, were used to sweep the arbor and cooking area scrupulously clean; and there were surprisingly few flies around the arbor. Generally shade was available, and the eating was done under the trees, away from the arbor. Wood, of course, was the fuel for the campfire.

When the time came for the really bad weather of fall, tents were pitched. Some families still had tepee poles and canvas covering for them. The buffalo-hide coverings had been gone for a long time when I arrived on the scene. The tents and tepees, together with the house, supplied the shelter needed in truly bad weather.

I have been in and around camps many times, and on occasion have even found it necessary to stay for the night. I watched the division of labor, seeking to find a clue as to who bossed whom. I never arrived at any satisfactory answers. Apparently the husband kept hands off, and the cooking area may have been out of bounds for him. At least, he stayed clear until the call for food. I never saw any of the women seek advice from the husband while the preparation of the meal was in progress.

There were exceptions, but at the home camp the husband usually corralled the horses and roped the ones to be used. Generally one of the women would come and help him harness or saddle up. Apparently the same wife helped with the horses each time. I was never aware of an order being given. When a family was in camp on the reservation for its Grass Money, the husband ordinarily cared for the horses.

At the home camp, one or two of the squaws would take a team and the wagon into the woods for the camp's wood supply. The squaws selected the down timber and chopped it into small enough pieces so that they could load it on the wagon to be hauled to camp. In one family group, this task was permanently assigned to a wife who had been so indiscreet as to give birth to a white baby. (The displeasure was not, however, visited upon the child. Not only was it treated just the same as the other children, but at times I was inclined to think it was actually the husband's favorite.)

I never saw anything to indicate that the first or oldest wife was necessarily the favorite one, nor was I able to tell which one of the women established the division of labor. A more trained observer than I might have secured more accurate information. In any event, of these things I am sure: there was a division of labor, and each wife